

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY NEA:AR DAY/HLK

APPROVED BY P - MR. HABIB

NEA - MR. ATHERTON

S/S - MR. REDDY

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 207252 TOSEC 220010

EXDIS WHITE HOUSE PASS TO EAGLEBURGER FOR SEC KISSINGER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, IS, EG, US

SUBJECT: ISRAELI INTERFERENCE WITH AMOCO OPERATIONS IN GULF
OF SUEZ

REF: TELAVIV 5611, TEL AVIV 5680 AND CAIRO 11182
FROM HABIB

1. ISRAELI POSITION REGARDING AMOCO PLANS TO DRILL AT
SITE 304-1, WHICH HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO EMBASSY TEL AVIV BY
RAVIV (TEL AVIV 5680), WAS ALSO CONVEYED TO DEPARTMENT ON
THE EVENING OF AUGUST 18 BY BAR-ON, OF ISRAELI EMBASSY.
BAR-ON STATED THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAD DETERMINED
THAT SITE WAS EAST OF THE MEDIAN LINE IN THE GULF. BAR-ON
SAID THAT ALLON HAD ASKED THAT THE MESSAGE BE CONVEYED TO
THE SECRETARY THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT WANT A QUARREL ON THIS
MATTER BUT THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR ISRAEL TO AGREE
TO A CHANGE IN ITS MEDIAN LINE POLICY. ISRAEL WOULD LIKE
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TO HAVE US TELL AMOCO NOT TO DRILL ON THE EAST SIDE OF

THE MEDIAN LINE. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT WE WOULD BRING THIS ISSUE TO THE SECRETARY'S ATTENTION AND THAT MEANWHILE WE WOULD IMMEDIATELY INFORM AMOCO OF THE ISRAELI RESPONSE. HE NOTED THAT, AS THE ISRAELIS WERE AWARE, WE DISAGREED ON THE LEGAL POSITION AND CONSIDERED THAT AMOCO WAS WELL WITHIN ITS RIGHTS TO DRILL AT THE SITE IN QUESTION. HE SAID WE COULD NOT MAKE THE COMPANY'S DECISION FOR IT BUT

WERE ACTING AS A CHANNEL TO BE SURE THERE WAS NO MISUNDERSTANDING.

2. AS EMBASSY IS AWARE, WE THEN INSTRUCTED EMBASSY CAIRO TO INFORM AMOCO OF THE ISRAELI RESPONSE. WE ALSO INFORMED AMOCO IN NEW YORK ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 19. THE NEW YORK OFFICE TOLD US THAT AMOCO WOULD PROBABLY ENDEAVOR TO DRILL DESPITE THE ISRAELI RESPONSE IN ORDER TO AVOID LOSING THE LEASE. IT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED TO EMBASSY CAIRO BY THE AMOCO OFFICE THERE THAT THE COMPANY DID IN FACT INTEND TO PROCEED, PERHAPS AS EARLY AS AUGUST 20. (CAIRO 11182). AMOCO ASKED THAT WE CONVEY THIS INFORMATION TO THE ISRAELIS.

3. HABIB CALLED BAR-ON, THEREFORE, IN THE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 19 AND TOLD HIM OF THE AMOCO POSITION. HE ASKED THAT THE INFORMATION BE CONVEYED URGENTLY TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TOGETHER WITH AN EXPRESSION OF OUR HOPE AND EXPECTATION THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THE OPERATION OF THIS AMERICAN COMPANY. HE NOTED THAT, AS WE HAD TOLD THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IN THE PAST, WE REGARD ISRAELI THREATS AND HARASSMENT AGAINST THE OPERATION OF AMERICAN FIRMS IN THE GULF AS A SERIOUS MATTER.

4. BAR-ON SAID HE WOULD CONVEY THE POINTS IMMEDIATELY TO HIS GOVERNMENT AND SAID HE ASSUMED THAT IT WOULD ALSO BE PASSED BY WAY OF OUR EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV. HABIB ASSURED HIM THIS WAS THE CASE. HABIB ALSO ASSURED HIM THAT WE WOULD BE BRINGING THE MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF THE SECRETARY, WHO WAS OUT OF THE CITY.

5. BAR-ON SUBSEQUENTLY CALLED BACK AND TOLD HABIB THAT
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HE HAD MADE A PRELIMINARY PHONE REPORT TO JERUSALEM AND HAD A PRELIMINARY RESPONSE. AMBASSADOR TOON WOULD RECEIVE A FULLER RESPONSE IN THE MORNING. HE SAID THE ISRAELIS FELT THAT THEY WERE BEING PUT IN A UNILATERAL POSITION BY A COMPANY AND OBJECTED TO THAT. THEY WERE PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BUT DID NOT FEEL THEY SHOULD BE PUT IN THIS POSITION BY A COMPANY. HABIB REPLIED THAT ISRAEL COULD WELL RESERVE ITS POSITION

ON THE LEGAL ISSUE WHILE NOT ACTUALLY CREATING AN INCIDENT WITH THE VESSEL. BAR-ON COMPLAINED ABOUT THE VERY SHORT NOTICE, AND HABIB POINTED OUT THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAD KNOWN FOR SOME TIME ABOUT OUR LEGAL OPINION ON THIS QUESTION AND ABOUT AMOCO'S PLANS REGARDING THIS SITE. HE SAID IT APPEARED TO HIM THAT THE OVERRIDING CONCERN WAS NOT TO CREATE A PROBLEM WHICH WOULD HAVE REPERCUSSIONS BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE.

6. AMBASSADOR TOON SHOULD GET IN TOUCH URGENTLY WITH THE MFA TO CONVEY THE INFORMATION ABOUT AMOCO'S INTENTION TO PROCEED AND TO URGE THE ISRAELIS, AS WE HAVE FREQUENTLY DONE IN THE PAST, NOT TO INTERFERE WITH THIS OPERATION.

7. FOR EMBASSY CAIRO: YOU SHOULD TELL AMOCO ONLY THAT WE HAVE PASSED TO THE ISRAELIS THE INFORMATION CONCERNING THE COMPANY'S PLANS TO PROCEED WITH DRILLING. ROBINSON

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